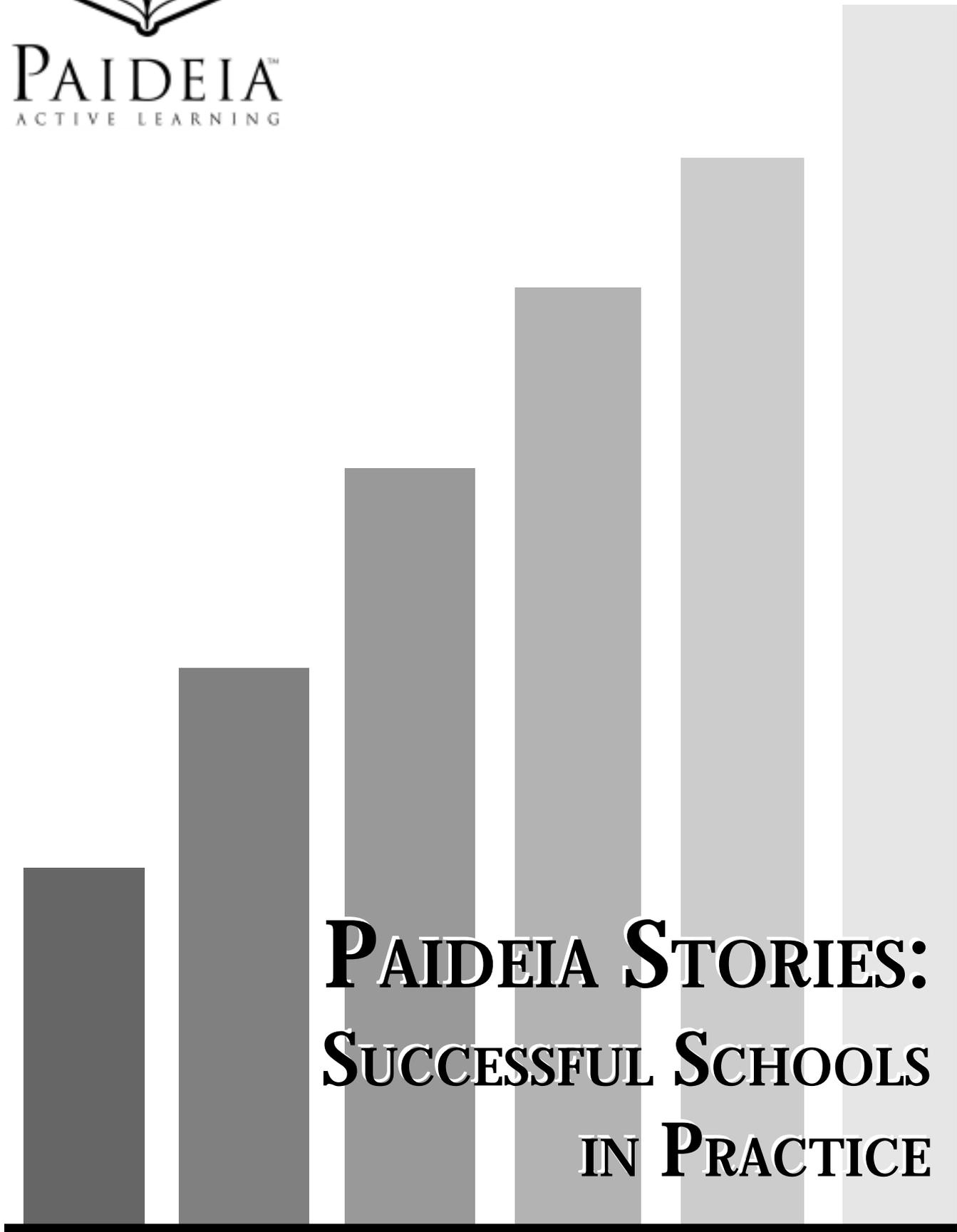




**PAIDEIA**<sup>™</sup>  
ACTIVE LEARNING



**PAIDEIA STORIES:  
SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS  
IN PRACTICE**

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*Graphic Design by Ana Patricia Bernal*

# PAIDEIA STORIES:

## SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS IN PRACTICE



PAIDEIA™  
ACTIVE LEARNING



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# INTRODUCTION

*COMMUNICATE: VB. TO SHARE, TO CONVEY KNOWLEDGE OR INFORMATION, TO MAKE KNOWN, TO REVEAL BY CLEAR SIGNS, TO TRANSMIT THOUGHT OR FEELING SO THAT IT IS SATISFACTORILY RECEIVED OR UNDERSTOOD.*

In this new century, it has become increasingly apparent that effective communication is essential, whether in public or private life. Visionary leaders in all areas of life strive for more open and collaborative communication.

Communication is no less vital in public education because it is the heart and soul of learning. One school reform model that focuses on improved communication throughout the teaching and learning process is the Paideia Program.

Paideia (py-DEE-a) is from the Greek pais or paidos and refers to the proper upbringing of a child. In a more overarching sense, it refers to the general learning that is the birthright of all human beings.

Paideia is not the only model for transforming stagnant schools into innovative learning centers, but it is one that has proven itself through data-based research as a successful model with long-lasting results. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education's "Continuum of Evidence of Effectiveness" has been expanded to include evidence of student intellectual and social growth beyond that represented by standardized test data. This movement is significant because recent evaluations of the Paideia Program have shown important gains in school culture, student engagement, and self-efficacy as well as growth in achievement test scores.

Earlier studies on school systems in Chicago, Cincinnati, and Chattanooga observed that Paideia instructional methods had a direct impact on the climate of individual classrooms and entire schools, increasing both student and teacher interest in academic study and democratic self-governance.

Since the early 1990s, research data have demonstrated dramatic gains in writing test scores in North Carolina schools that use Paideia teaching practices. Similar results have been shown more recently in schools in New York, Wisconsin, Florida, and multiple cities in North Carolina, even in schools facing what might seem to be insurmountable socio-economic odds.

Among the general outcomes of research in Paideia schools or systems across the country is the growth in academic test scores, advancement in student social skills, increased student security, increased parental awareness and involvement in school programs, and fundamental shifts in understanding of teaching and learning. These gains have been documented in grades K-12 across all subject areas and among students of diversified backgrounds.

Below are highlighted several of the most significant and specific findings that have emerged from various independent studies of Paideia schools (see References for a list of studies):

- Schools having the highest degree of Paideia implementation produced academic outcomes with the most desired result, including higher scores, suggesting that a critical mass of Paideia activities produce the most positive achievement.
- Paideia schools generally improved at a faster rate than non-Paideia schools.
- In terms of student achievement, schools that made a solid commitment to Paideia instruction

- (through initial teacher training) outperformed schools with few or no Paideia -trained teachers.
- The positive effect of Paideia instruction appeared similar in elementary, middle, and high schools, suggesting that success is attainable at any grade level.
  - The Paideia program has a positive effect on school climate. Where Paideia was in place there was less friction in classes with fewer discipline problems. Students expressed the sentiment that they felt safer and enjoyed greater flexibility in their classes.
  - Increased student perceptions of the quality of teachers, their self-concept and their sense of self-efficacy.
  - Teachers trained in the Paideia method were better at explaining material, students were better able to understand material and were expected to work harder with more attention to independent thinking, and academic experiences were identified as “fun”.
  - Paideia success showed similar outcomes with males and females and with majority and minority students.
  - Students in Paideia classrooms had increased perceptions about the clarity and consistency of rules.

# THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A PAIDEIA SCHOOL

Schools across the country that have successfully implemented Paideia Philosophy into everyday operations can be characterized by a consistent set of factors. The Essential Elements of a Paideia School provide a tool to help summarize several factors generally related to school transformation and specifically seen in effective Paideia Schools.

The Essential Elements are divided into five important categories: Teaching and Learning; School Culture; Leadership; Community Involvement; and Scheduling. Taken together, these five areas constitute a truly systemic approach to school transformation— in which all aspects of a school community are rededicated to a rigorous education for all children.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- All teachers in the school use Paideia seminars as a central teaching/learning device.
- All teachers in the school use product-oriented coaching techniques for the majority of the instructional program.
- All teachers in the school use relatively little didactic teaching, and that which is used actively engages students.
- The school stresses the same integrated core curriculum for all students, including fine arts, music, foreign language, and the manual arts, giving students the opportunity to explore these areas as they relate to the core academic subjects.
- Assessment of students and teachers is individualized in addition to standardized: emphasizing portfolio and narrative assessments in conjunction with traditional grading and appraisal. Individual growth is consistently stressed.

In The Paideia Proposal, Mortimer Adler described three types of instruction in a Paideia School as: didactic, coaching, and seminar. Teachers analyze state standards and local curriculum to identify the facts, skills, ideas and values that students need to remember, do, and understand. Based on such curriculum analysis, a teacher then helps students remember facts through didactic instruction (approximately 10-15% of class time). Similarly, a teacher supports students' skill development through intellectual coaching (about 70% of class time). Finally, students' conceptual understanding is strengthened and enhanced through seminars (15-20% of class time). All three types of instruction are important; however, the National Paideia Center focuses its efforts on helping teachers particularly in the latter two methods – to develop their Seminar leadership skills and to plan and lead Paideia Coached Projects that integrate all three types of teaching and learning in powerful units of classroom study.

Through Paideia training, teachers learn how to reduce their classroom lecture time and increase the amount of instruction based on seminar discussions that enhance independent student thinking and improved reasoning skills. Open and collaborative communication is an essential ingredient of the Paideia Seminar. The thoughtful and spontaneous dialogue in seminars, where respect and listening skills are critical to success, fosters independent and creative thought. Paideia promotes the challenging of ideas, not personalities, and encourages civil discourse as a means of expanding knowledge.

As teachers become adept with all three columns of teaching and learning, they learn to integrate

them into powerful coached projects. A Paideia Coached Project culminates in a product and/or performance for an audience outside of the classroom and addresses a real world issue. Students work on the generation of a product and/or performance in order to display their mastery of the curricular information, skills, and concepts in the unit. Throughout the coached project, students exercise choice, work together, and learn to monitor the quality of their work in anticipation of the external audience.

Paideia builds on and supplements accepted teaching practices by fostering more independent thinking, more open discussion and communication and more creativity among individual students and student teams. As you explore the success stories contained in this book, you will see how the consistent implementation of the Paideia Seminar and Coached Project have affected both the affective and cognitive lives of students in these schools, leading to higher levels of achievement as well as higher levels of safety and satisfaction.

## SCHOOL CULTURE

- The school is dedicated to the lifelong learning of all children and all adults.
- Since the goal of schooling is to foster lifelong learning of all involved, the school is full of adults and children who view themselves as constantly growing and learning, whose self-assessment is both demanding and fluid.

For years, Paideia teachers have recounted stories of how the values and habits of seminar discussion have seeped out of the seminar circle itself and into the life of the school. They have described how, intentionally or unintentionally, students have become more respectful, more thoughtful, and more open-minded in all of their dealings with each other and with the adults in the building. Although the original intent of the Paideia Seminar was to enhance the conceptual skill and understanding of students, it has had the dramatic “side-effect” of improving their social as well as intellectual skills, so that now social growth and development have become key goals of the program and play an integral part in influencing seminar implementation.

As you will see in the stories that follow, there now exists a strong body of research to support the notion that the respectful, student-centered teaching of a Paideia classroom causes students to feel much greater self-efficacy and safety as their sense of belonging to a caring community grows. In the volatile world where so many of our schools exist, this factor is extremely important. In the early days of high-stakes accountability, many states discounted school culture as a soft and immeasurable criterion. However, recent violent episodes in our public schools have served as a tragic reminder that our schools must be safe and caring communities. Furthermore, the research is clear that students learn more when they feel both safe and valued. For these reasons, we have chosen to emphasize the importance of Paideia’s benevolent impact on school culture just as much as its positive effect on student achievement.

## LEADERSHIP

- School leaders consistently articulate a common vision aligned with the Paideia philosophy.
- Decisions are made democratically on the basis of what is best for students.
- Students in the school learn to become self governing, both as individuals and as a group. Students are active participants in the democratic process.

- Leadership is shared such that organizational management and instructional leadership are of the highest quality.

For a number of years, research on educational reform has emphasized the primary importance of school-based leadership in the change process. The Paideia Program focused on leadership development as part of its implementation plan for two reasons: one, democratic governance that involves a variety of stakeholders is part of the design itself; and two, systemic transformation of a school community requires inspired leadership from a number of individuals at various levels of the school structure.

The original 12 Paideia Principles focus on the school principal as the “principal teacher” in the building, one who actively engages with the faculty in the ongoing improvement of the instructional program. In order to accomplish this goal and to honor the democratic nature of the Paideia philosophy, principal leaders learn how to involve a number of teachers and other community members in the governance of the school in general and in the implementation of Paideia in particular. In this way, the adults in a school building come to model the democratic process for the students, who are engaged in learning the skills of self-governance in the classroom.

In addition, truly systemic school transformation is such a complex and demanding task that it requires the collaborative efforts of a high-performance team of administrators, teachers, parents, and (where appropriate) students. Seen in this light, it becomes the job of a principal to collaboratively create a vision that includes an instructional focus and makes decisions that align with the focus. In addition, the principal empowers a leadership team to fully implement the program.

For these reasons, when you read the stories documented in the following chapters, you will hear the testimonies and see the work of a wide variety of school leaders—women and men actively engaged in the systemic improvement of their schools through the collaborative help of an implementation team.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- The school is the center of a larger learning community.
- Community members participate in teaching and learning.

From the very first year of implementation, most Paideia schools include community seminars as part of their program plan. A community seminar is a fully realized Paideia Seminar hosted in the afternoon or evening for members of the community. Hosted with refreshments, teachers lead discussions of a text (relevant to the school community) by groups of community members, facilitating the conversation with open-ended questions. In this way, parents and other community members come to understand viscerally what students are experiencing in the classroom, and many go on to become active members of the Paideia implementation team and/or volunteer seminar leaders themselves.

The Paideia School also includes community members as participants in the teaching and assessment of coached projects. Parents and other community members are consistently asked to help plan and implement coached projects as well as serve as the natural audiences for student productions and performances. In this way, they become an integral part of the learning life of the classroom and are more likely to stay involved as students matriculate from elementary into middle and high school.

## SCHEDULING

- The school allows instructional needs to shape scheduling, and scheduling flexibility is the rule rather than the exception.

When Paideia instructional methods are fully implemented in a school, they often require that teachers work together to adjust the schedule accordingly: whether that schedule is the daily events in a self-contained classroom, the collaborative schedule of a middle-school team, or the multiple periods of a traditional high school. In every case, what characterizes these scheduling adjustments is the decision to maintain quality instruction as a constant and let time become a variable subject to that constant.

For example, a high school may request and obtain permission to hold four delayed openings during the year to allow the faculty to meet in the early morning for a faculty seminar. A middle-school team may arrange their common schedule to allow various groups within the team to work on the separate elements of a coached project, including a variety of seminars. An elementary school may institute a “seminar schedule” every other Wednesday, which allows for a school-wide seminar in mid-morning.

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The chapters that follow contain stories of special Paideia schools, schools whose success has been documented by objective assessment and evaluation data. These stories illuminate how culture, teaching and learning, leadership, community involvement and scheduling constitute an interlocking design that eventually transforms every aspect of a school community. Each story included in this compilation offers its own unique perspective on Paideia’s Essential Elements. Bridgeton, New Jersey examines three struggling schools that are beginning to experience dramatic improvements since launching Paideia a year ago. Three other chapters – Seventy-First Classical Middle School (in Cumberland County, NC), Oakhurst Academy (in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, NC) and Bluford Communications Magnet School (in Guilford County, NC) illuminate various Essential Elements within each school. Finally, Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences (in Hamilton County, Tennessee) – one of the model’s longest-running schools — provides an example of how Paideia is built from the ground up and sustained successfully over time.





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**PAIDEIA ACADEMY  
AT OAKHURST K-5  
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA**

# ***Paideia Academy at Oakhurst / K-5***

**Charlotte, North Carolina**

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What was once Oakhurst Elementary School is now the Paideia Academy at Oakhurst. Routine classroom lecture sessions have now been replaced by open and candid intellectual discussion among students and teachers – in all grades, including kindergarten.

Oakhurst was one of the first schools in North Carolina to adopt Paideia in the late 1980s. By the middle 1990s the principal, Diane Adams, sought and received approval to change the name to Paideia Academy. This new identity, Adams said, more accurately reflected the intensity of the Paideia practices being implemented across the entire school. In addition to being one of the first schools in the state to embrace Paideia, Oakhurst has been one of the most successful in terms of level of implementation and resulting improvements in student achievement, school culture and quality of leadership.

Principal Adams, who has since moved to another school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system, learned of Paideia in 1989 during a principal's summer training institute. Impressed with the open and detailed discussion during a seminar on the Declaration of Independence — when the document was dissected virtually word for word — Adams concluded that concept was worth pursuing at her school. "It occurred to me that this kind of discussion was so powerful that it deserved further investigation," Adams told an interviewer on her reasons for adopting the change. Anxious about the reaction to the new teaching approach in the school comprised mostly of lower and middle income parents, Adams was pleased at the positive parental acceptance. Parents accepted the new method as a positive step toward academic enhancement, peer respect, and civility. Each year since, that belief has grown. Now, parents throughout the Charlotte metropolitan area seek out the school for their children because of Paideia's proven reputation for offering stronger incentives for academic and societal success than at other area schools.

## **Teaching and Learning**

"Prior to Paideia, Oakhurst was simply a traditional school of all didactic instruction," said

Meryle Elko, the school's former Paideia facilitator who has become a regional administrator for the county school system. "Before Paideia, all teachers were doing the same thing at the same time. Everything was based on textbook lectures. Under the old methods of teaching, Oakhurst would have been a low performing school under existing North Carolina academic guidelines. For the last three years, Oakhurst has been a school of distinction with more than 80 percent of students surpassing their grade level. I attribute that to the way instruction is now presented."

There is a perception among some educators that students from lower socio-economic background cannot learn as quickly and achieve as much as those from high income families. Oakhurst has debunked that perception. Achievement levels at the school do not appear to be based on economics or family background. Consider the demographics. Although many Oakhurst students come from more affluent Charlotte neighborhoods because parents believe in the strength of Paideia teaching, the school's student population is comprised of almost half who are eligible for free or reduced lunches based on limited family income. The immediate school neighborhood is decidedly working class and predominantly lower income. Now consider the school's record. Academic success of Oakhurst students ranks at the same level as schools with as few as 10 percent eligibility for reduced price meals.

## **Culture**

Academic achievement aside, however, there is another impressive aspect of Paideia practices at Oakhurst. Discipline problems are few. Visitors to the school notice immediately the civility of students toward their peers and teachers and respect toward strangers. "Visitors can readily see and often comment on the civility and respect of students," Elko said. Brenda Duff, current Paideia facilitator, agreed. "We have fewer discipline problems because students are actively involved, not just sitting and listening to a lecture without a chance to express their own ideas,"

Duff said.

Oakhurst is one of two Paideia magnet schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system. The other is Randolph Middle School that serves, among others, students who graduate from Oakhurst. “Teachers there tell us they can tell students from Oakhurst because of their openness and willingness to express themselves,” commented Duff.

Teacher culture has also been positively affected by the adoption of Paideia, though there were initial “growing pains.” At first, some teachers at Oakhurst didn’t like the idea, merely because it represented change. Many left in the first years, but those who stayed and those who have since joined the faculty are stronger and better educators as a result. “The teachers are now comfortable and turnover is light,” Elko said.

Duff concurred. “Teacher confidence has grown,” she said. “Paideia has given teachers a lot of new skills and practices they can use in their classrooms to best fit the students’ needs. There is a feeling of accomplishment all around.”

### Leadership

Former principal Adams said although she was initially disappointed in the negative teacher response, she was not particularly surprised. “After the first year or two, we began to hire the best and brightest,” she explained. Elko added: “We sought to hire faculty with the vision for change and a willingness to adopt the Paideia philosophy. This spills over to parents and students. Problem solving is achieved through cooperation and sharing of ideas.” Her comments reflect Paideia’s priority on democratic leadership, where teachers recognize and exercise their roles as leaders, and administrators concurrently see themselves first as teachers.

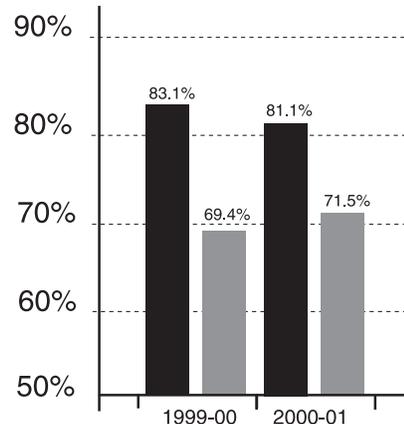
### Community Involvement

Among the forceful advocates of Paideia at Oakhurst are the parents and other family members of students. One is Jim Martin, a former North Carolina congressman and governor who has a particular interest in academic achievement. Before entering politics, Martin was a college professor whose field of expertise was science. He has a granddaughter who was a Paideia student at Oakhurst before moving to middle school

Oakhurst Academy students consistently score higher than the county average on end of year tests in reading and writing, an achievement that instructors attribute largely to the influence of Paideia:

### Paideia Academy at Oakhurst

4<sup>th</sup> Grade State READING Test

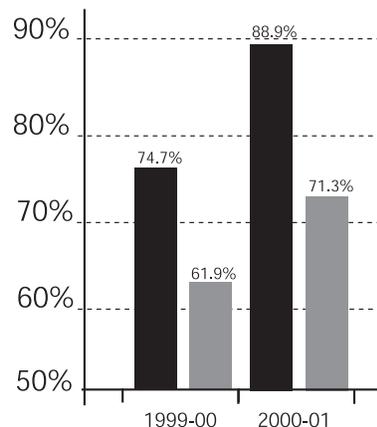


% of students passing

■ Oakhurst  
■ Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District

### Paideia Academy at Oakhurst

4<sup>th</sup> Grade State WRITING Test



% of students passing

■ Oakhurst  
■ Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District

and a grandson who is still at Oakhurst.

“They have been well served by teachers at the school who have encouraged them to engage in discussions and thought,” the former governor said.

“The program has provided a well-rounded educational experience. Paideia encourages students to think in their own language. It makes students inquisitive. The most impressive aspect is the encouragement students receive.”

While Paideia is designed for student advantage in all classes, Martin said his granddaughter had been especially well served in her music and science studies.

The positive parental response to success at Oakhurst is showing results. “Parental word of mouth has been our best selling point,” Elko said.

In other words, it’s working. The hope is that word will continue to spread.

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**BLUFORD COMMUNICATIONS**  
**MAGNET SCHOOL K-5**  
**GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA**

# ***Bluford Communications Magnet School / K-5***

## **Greensboro, North Carolina**

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"Wildly successful" is the phrase Bluford Communications Magnet School teacher Linda Vaughan used to describe a teacher retreat focused on enhancing and expanding the Paideia Program in this Guilford County school in Greensboro. That, in fact, is a label that could properly be attached to the ongoing record of academic accomplishment at Bluford, where the achievements are the envy of many other schools in the region. In fact, rising academic scores at Bluford have become a tradition. The former principal, Tanya Feagins, and most teachers credit Paideia with much of their success.

### **Leadership**

How many public school teachers would willingly give up a beautiful spring weekend with their families and friends to sit for eight hours in an out-of-town conference room debating fourth and fifth grade lesson plans?

Eighteen classroom teachers from the Bluford Communications Magnet School in Greensboro did just that because of their enthusiasm for Paideia. Not only were they engaged in ensuring that Paideia was retained at their school over time, but they also used the day to develop visionary plans to expand and improve on past accomplishments.

Armed with great ideas collected at the 2000 Paideia Annual Conference in Greensboro, the teachers convened at an off-campus retreat at Western Carolina University. The exclusive goal was to plan and discuss Paideia, initially in the large group format and later in small groups where they formulated grade level planning as part of a three-year plan.

"We were excited about new ideas and wanted to share them with each other, commented Vaughan, who is Bluford's in-house Paideia facilitator. "We had a tremendous weekend of discussion and ideas to share. It was very helpful especially to those who were not as experienced in Paideia."

Paideia is an integral part of the overall school improvement plan at Bluford. It was also consistently championed by Principal Feagins, one of the biggest Paideia supporters in the county school system, during

her tenure at the school. "We have an active school improvement team made up of faculty members who are joined by parents," Vaughan said. "Most of the decisions are made from the ground up by that team. We work directly with parents. We talk at the beginning of each school year about where we have been, where we are, how we have progressed and then set goals on where to go for the next three years. This is all part of our staff development that is centered around Paideia."

At Bluford, the whole school is involved in staff development as one means of showing the value of teamwork and nurturing collaboration.

Cooperative teaching as part of the teamwork is a favored habit. Teachers make time to serve as tutors for small groups of students in order to give closer supervision and help with individualized projects. Students at different skill levels are shifted within grades to match those with similar strengths. "We want them teamed this way so they can more easily understand each other and learn, whether from teachers or their peers," Vaughan explained.

"This helps us value change," she said. "We are not afraid to adopt something new, to try different approaches. If something doesn't work, we push it aside and try something else. It makes us more willing to take risks. There are many different ways to learn and sometimes we just need to bring in someone else, another teacher. We learn best from each other as we encompass new ideas and target specific needs among the students.

"Paideia has contributed to our successes because as we try new things it teaches ways to problem-solve and think through ideas. Students love the small groups because they like the special attention. The principal is also involved in small group discussions. It's good for teacher morale that the principal is so involved in what goes on in the classrooms."

### **Culture**

Bluford is an aging facility with an enrollment of 400 located in a low-income neighborhood of East Greensboro. As a magnet school, it draws students, in addition to the immediate neighborhood, from as far

away as High Point and Jamestown to the South and Gibsonville and McLeansville to the East. Overall, the student body is made up of 60 percent racial minorities. Forty-three percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches because of limited family resources.

Rather than use demographics as an excuse for not showing high performance, administrators and faculty at the school see that as an opportunity and a challenge to prove that quality teaching and learning counts, regardless of perceived racial or economic disadvantages.

The overall climate at the school is one of pride in shared accomplishment. Bluford has been judged a "blue ribbon" school by the U.S. Department of Education for the second year in a row. This distinction is based on a series of examples of high performance of faculty and students. Bluford is one of 14 schools in North Carolina to win the award and the only one in Guilford County to ever be chosen for the honor.

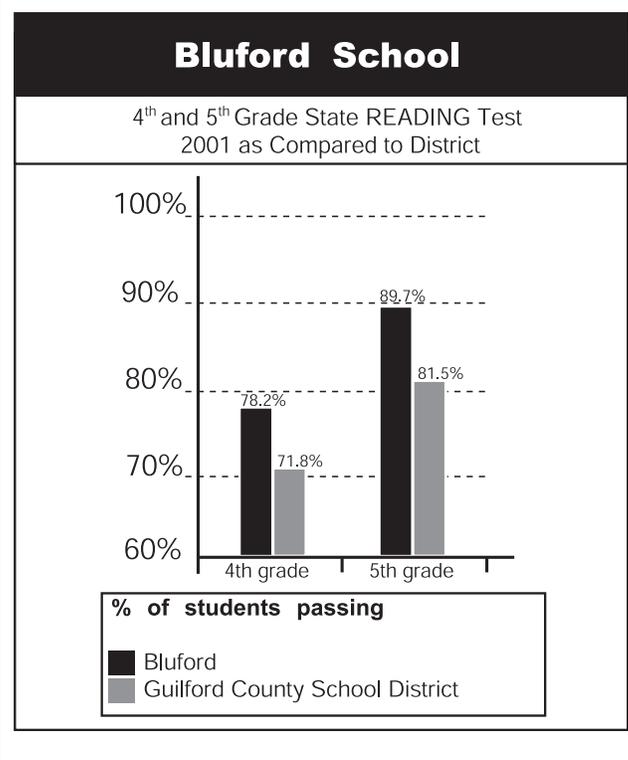
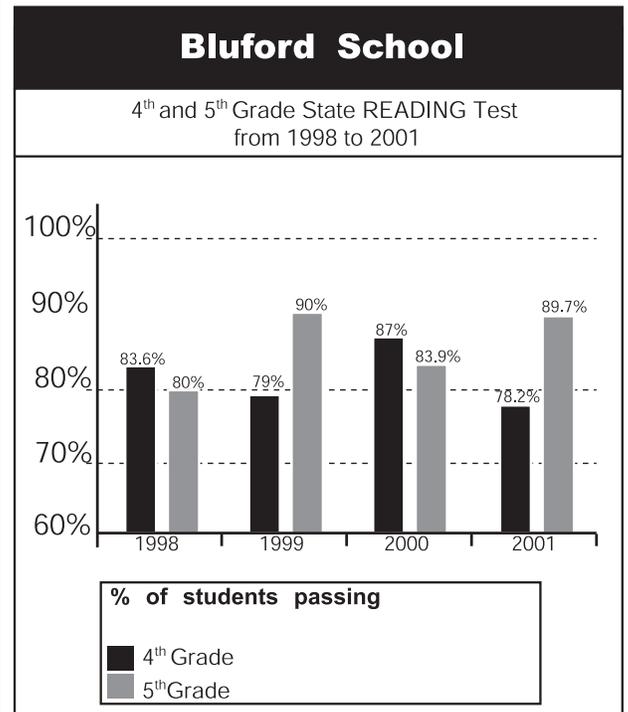
"It has brought our diverse faculty together and opened up opportunities for useful and beneficial dialogue about shared experiences that would not have happened without this process," Vaughan said. "It has helped make us better teachers and been a big equalizer because of the diversity in experience levels." A fourth grader at Bluford said it even better -- "I like seminars because I see sides of people I never saw before. It also lets people express their true feelings to one another.

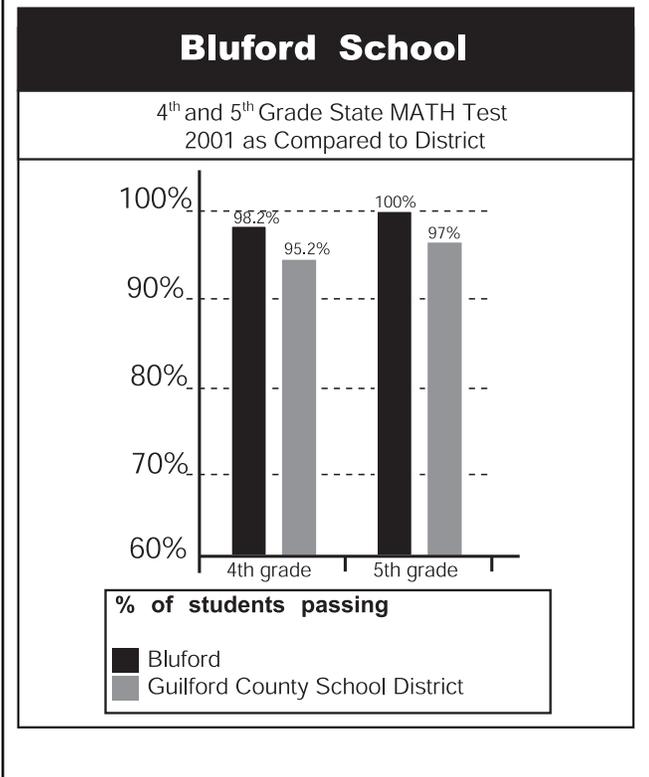
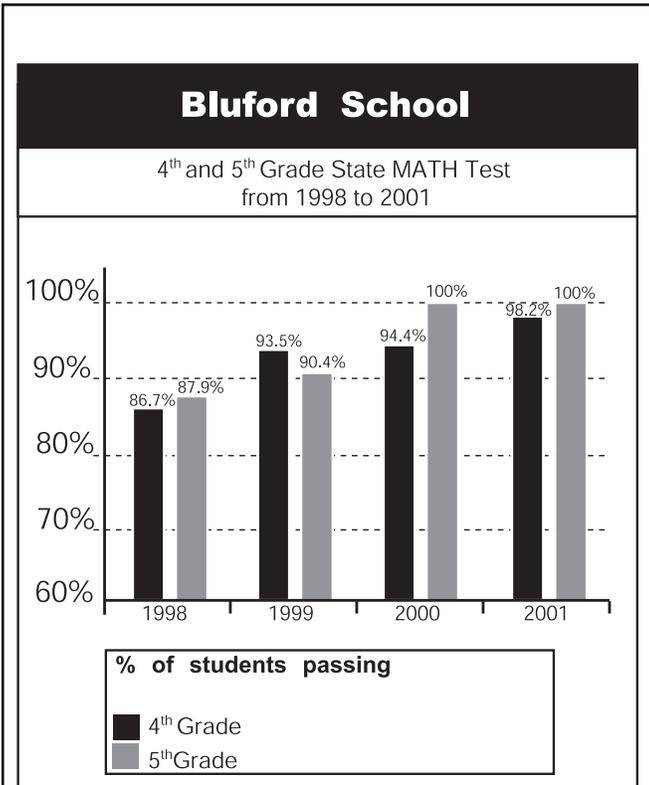
### Teaching and Learning

Bluford has been at or near the academic top of Guilford County's elementary schools four years in a row. It has been classified as a school of distinction in the exemplary category on statewide tests. When state tests were implemented, 80 percent of the students met standards. The scores have risen each year, first to 84 percent and most recently to 90 percent on reading, math, and writing. That highest ranking puts Bluford in the "excellent" category.

Bluford, one of the first schools in Guilford County to adopt Paideia, is one of several magnet schools in the county system with a stated emphasis on communication. Communication is one of the keys to the success of Paideia, and Bluford's record is a testimonial that it works. Ninety-five percent of the faculty uses at least some form of Paideia in regular

Across elementary grade levels, Bluford students consistently score above county averages on state end of grade reading and math tests. Over the past four years, well over 80% of Bluford 4th and 5th graders have repeatedly performed at or above grade level in reading and math, with 100% of 5th graders demonstrating proficiency two years in a row in math.





classroom instruction as part of the long-range goals that are reviewed and enhanced each year.

"Academic success is based on coaching and our monthly seminars," Vaughan pointed out. "These kinds of approaches seem to us to be really important

in communication. Students develop skills this way at speaking and justifying their thoughts and ideas. We can see progress from kindergarten through the fifth grade. It is easy to see how Paideia helps mold their thinking processes. Students and faculty enjoy and appreciate this type of learning environment."

Using Paideia as a foundation for open discussion and improving thinking and communication skills contributes to what the Bluford faculty calls life-long learning. Based on the school's record of success, students there are getting good starts at learning that will serve them now and later.

"For our students, it has put everyone in an arena for an equal level of acceptance," Vaughan said. Our students come from many different backgrounds. The communication skills learned through seminars have helped connect critical thinking to the development of ideas. You can't teach new skills without real meaning. Seminars provide that meaning. There has been too much rote instruction in the past. Paideia changes that and opens up opportunities for meaningful exchanges and makes it all real. It gives learning positive new dimensions."

Here is what the students are saying:

"I like Paideia seminars because when you read a story the teacher makes sure you are listening and thinking of good ideas." -- 3rd grader

"Seminars teach you something you wouldn't have thought about. You get to hear from someone else." -- 4th grader

"Knowing people's feelings and getting to share my thoughts is the key thing I love in Paideia. I become interested in finding out more information on the books and topics that I did not know. -- 5th grader

"I think Paideia is good for speaking and sharing ideas. Sometimes if the text is non-fiction, it makes us think harder. I like it because I can speak out loud and listen to other kid's ideas. - 5th grader

### Community Involvement

As part of the Paideia approach to coached-project teaching, the faculty chose a trip to Washington, D.C. for fifth graders during the last school year. That was in addition to a whole-school ecology project involving all grade levels. But the trip to the nation's capital was not just for sightseeing. For weeks in advance of the trip, teachers worked with fifth graders

in groups of three as students learned about historically significant places or monuments in the city. After getting facts through weeks of research, students were then assigned to design and create replicas of the buildings or monuments they had studied.

It was, Vaughan said, one of the most

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informative and meaningful long-range learning projects ever carried out at the school. "These kinds of hands-on learning experiments have far more value than just lecturing about a place or thing, whether in Washington or elsewhere."



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**INDIAN AVENUE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
K-5**

**BRIDGETON MIDDLE SCHOOL  
6-8**

**BRIDGETON HIGH SCHOOL  
9-12**

*BRIDGETON, NEW JERSEY*

## ***Indian Avenue Elementary School /Bridgeton Middle School/Bridgeton High School*** **Bridgeton, New Jersey**

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Cumberland County, New Jersey lies less than an hour from bustling downtown Philadelphia, but in many ways the county is a world away from its Pennsylvania neighbors. While Philadelphia thrives and grows, Cumberland struggles to avoid slipping backward.

Cumberland has the highest teen pregnancy rate and highest percentage of AIDS of any county in New Jersey. The community's once major industries have closed, been absorbed by competitors or moved to other areas. The major industry left in Bridgeton, the heart of Cumberland County, is the state prison system.

Among the multitude of societal problems relating to both economic and family stability in Bridgeton are serious concerns regarding the public school system. Public school students in Bridgeton have a history of low academic performance and high disciplinary problems. At the middle and high school levels, upwards of 90 percent of the students come from homes with limited incomes and, too often, limited parental interest in academic achievement. The majority of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunches because of scarce family resources. Few parents have more than a high school education, many with even less. The same demographic patterns exist at the elementary level where many of the students and families are migrant farm workers.

School officials in Bridgeton faced a serious dilemma a few years ago as academic scores continued to drop and other classroom issues like discipline and dropout rates were going in the opposite direction. The schools in the community were under a mandate from the state to improve. Principals and teachers were given ultimatums to get better or get out.

The state mandate resulted from a decades-old court case in which a student filed a civil action against public schools in New Jersey on the grounds that he had received an inadequate education based on lack of public resources. The court battle lingered for 23 years even as the academic achievements continued to decline. In 1998, the original plaintiff in the case won when courts ordered revisions in the state school system and placed the burden on the state to improve academic

standards.

Three of Bridgeton's schools accepted the challenge by adopting the Paideia Program, seeing it as the smoothest and fastest road to success. The result has been an immediate improvement in academic achievement with steadily rising test scores, more teacher and student enthusiasm in classroom activities, and increased teamwork with fewer discipline disruptions.

Leaders at Indian Avenue Elementary, Bridgeton Middle and Bridgeton High Schools give much of the credit to Paideia for their rising standards. The schools have not abandoned the state standards; rather, they have taken the best of the state programs and supplemented them with Paideia theory and practice to bring higher levels of excellence. This is especially true at the elementary level where Paideia has been in use for a year longer than at the other two schools.

Parental interest in academic achievement has also increased more at the elementary level, but is growing at the other schools because Paideia practices encourage increased community participation. Paideia also has fostered increased peer respect and understanding from both students and faculty members.

"Bridgeton Middle School was considered a place with serious needs that had to be satisfied," said Nina Hendricks, Paideia facilitator at the school. "We needed whole school reform. We looked at a series of new approaches and chose Paideia over all the others. It is working quite well because it didn't require a great deal of upheaval to implement."

Paideia came to Bridgeton after teachers at Indian Avenue Elementary School visited Paideia Academy at Oakhurst in Charlotte, N.C. where one of the most successful Paideia programs in the country has been in place for more than a dozen years (see Oakhurst story in Chapter 1).

"We were a low performing school and were required to make changes and improvements," said Indian Avenue Paideia facilitator Pam Garwood, a veteran teacher at the school. "We considered three different reforms, but after visiting Oakhurst the

decision to choose Paideia was easy. We loved what we saw there with the rigorous academic requirement as well as the wholesome social behavior that Paideia seminars help create. This teaching concept allows the freedom to choose what is best for students.”

Bridgeton High School Paideia facilitator Barbara Goldschmidt offered similar views. “Paideia is a wonderful teaching tool,” she said. “Students appreciate the chance to speak and be listened to, to have their peers show respect. This approach gives students a chance to express themselves like they’ve never had before. It is working well at improving what we do at our school.”

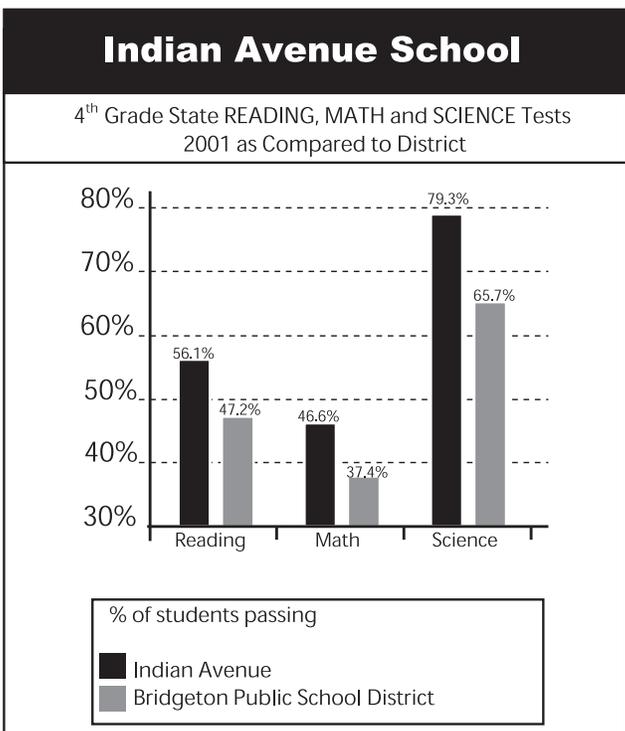
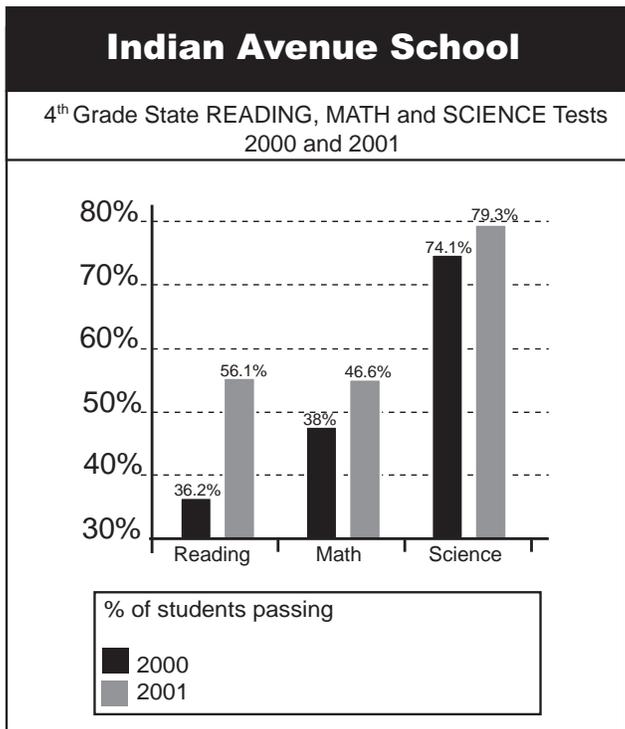
At Indian Avenue, in its third year of using the Paideia method, teachers have advanced to the second level of Paideia instruction with coached projects where students apply academic learning to work together on products or performances that have real world significance. Bridgeton Middle and Bridgeton High have not yet moved to that phase and are still developing seminars that use specific texts to allow for open and creative discussion through independent thinking and expression. Implementation of coached projects will be the next phase of implementation for these two schools.

“Paideia gives teachers the framework to introduce as many best practices as they choose or is practical and useful,” Garwood said. “In addition to helping students, Paideia has brought significant positive changes in the way faculty and staff perform. Teachers no longer look at their duties as simply their own business and no one else’s. They now share ideas, and collaboration and planning has increased. Our teachers have become thinking teachers and build on the strengths of each other.

“They are not just following some manual that may or may not work to the highest advantage of their students. They are taking the basic curriculum of the district, adding the skills they have learned in Paideia training and deciding the best way to teach their courses. We no longer joke that teaching is the second most private activity of adults. There is now open cooperation among faculty and staff through team approaches.

“This approach has advanced intellectual conversations among students, many of whom had very little to say before we began using seminars to foster discussions,” Garwood added. “Students love the give and take of open discussion and exchanges. This has

Since launching the Paideia program in 1999, Indian Avenue Elementary School has experienced steady gains in achievement, and has begun to perform above district averages on state tests:



added to the trust among classmates and helped bring about improved behavior and respect in remarkable ways. Our behavioral problems and suspensions are down and our writing scores are up. The positive impact of seminar activities is evident and the coached projects build on seminar successes for a culmination of the learning process.”

At Bridgeton Middle School, Hendricks says the quality of student writing projects has increased even after just one year of using the Paideia approach to learning because it has allowed more and broader student exchanges that have added to knowledge of topics being discussed. It also, she said, has increased the quality of teaching.

“Paideia has given me and other teachers a whole new way of looking at what we do in the classroom,” she said. “We now look at material in a different way and are more open to alternative methods of instruction. Our faculty is learning just as our students are. The majority of our staff is quite comfortable with this approach. It has exceeded our initial expectations for students and faculty because it has added to active involvement of all participants. We all ought to be lifelong learners and Paideia just proves that we can be.”

Paideia seminars at Bridgeton High School have included topics ranging from school violence to patriotism to musical stage performances. “When students are given a chance to speak up and express themselves, we have been amazed at their insight and thought processes,” Goldschmidt said. “Students are less afraid to speak up and more receptive to listening to each other. Our seminars have helped them understand we are all responsible for each other’s actions and that sometimes children are taught, even if unintentional, to hate people who are different. Our

discussions have brought those kinds of things into the open. Students appreciate and learn from that.”

The students echo this sentiment in their own words. Here is a sample of their feelings about the seminar experience:

“The world might be a better place if we had this (Paideia) a long time ago because people learn how to get along with others.”

“I’ve learned how to respect the other person’s views on topics. The idea, I guess, would be to learn to tolerate other people’s views.”

“I have learned how to express my feelings and I have raised my listening skills to a new level. I have also learned not to be scared to express my feelings and opinions. This could make my future better.”

“Nobody feels bad in seminars because there are no wrong or right answers. It is just our opinion about what we think. It helps because we get to cooperate with each other and get to know each other better.”

“I have learned to be patient, how to cooperate and how to be able to see things from another person’s point of view. I have also learned to listen carefully and to be honest, yet respectful in expressing ideas.”

Garwood, who is enrolled in an advanced study program on instructional leadership at the University of Pennsylvania, says Paideia methods are an important part of what her graduate instructors contend effective schools should be. “When these experts talk about good schools and how they should perform, they’re really talking about how Paideia works. This method of teaching fits into all effective school programs. Paideia is really what they’re all preaching that schools should be like. It’s a method of teaching that could make all schools better. It’s a good feeling to know we’re already part of that.”

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**SEVENTY-FIRST CLASSICAL  
MIDDLE SCHOOL 6-8  
FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA**

# ***Seventy-First Classical Middle School / 6-8***

**Fayetteville, North Carolina**

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"We learn not for school but for life."

--School Motto

"If better is possible, then good is not good enough"

--Sign in 8th grade classroom

These two slogans summarize the intent and goals of classroom instruction and student behavior at Seventy-First Classical, a Paideia school since its inception in 1996. Slogans, of course, must have real meaning if they are more than mere words on a wall. At Seventy-First these words have personal meaning for many students. They represent a kind of commandment that all students are expected to follow, and serve as the daily scriptures of strict adherence to disciplinary rules and rigorous intellectual pursuit of academic excellence.

The record shows extremely positive results.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Seventy-First is consistently at or near the top of the list in academic achievement among the 78 schools in this flatland county of eastern North Carolina; it was the highest performing school in the county three years in a row. Test scores at the school also traditionally surpass the average rankings of the majority of the schools in the state. Clearly, Seventy-First has demonstrated a solid record of achievement during its six years of existence. After its first year, Seventy-First was awarded the Governor's Excellence in Education Award and a School of Distinction honor. Each school year since, Seventy-First has been rated a school of excellence by the state's Board of Education and in 2000 was recognized as an Entrepreneurial School. For obvious reasons, other schools in Seventy-First's home county of Cumberland and other counties in the state have used the school as a model for enhancing academic performance.

"Before coming here and learning the Paideia way of teaching, I had always felt I was expected to know all the answers because students expected that," said Seventy-First veteran 8th grade teacher Edith

Williams. "But that's not the way it is or the way it should be. And I certainly don't feel that way any longer. With Paideia, students become as much a part of the learning process as the teacher. We, as teachers, can explore and discuss, but the students can also have input and can feel good about what they are saying and why they are saying it.

"Paideia gives students an opportunity to realize that their thoughts are as important as mine and as important as others. It really means a lot to eighth graders to be able and willing to step out and think deeper than they would if I were always in front of them giving out information. Students really enjoy discussing a point. They really want to be heard based on how they see things. They are ready and able to make valid points and find new thoughts and ideas that teachers are not always able to provide."

In North Carolina, as other states, heavy emphasis is placed on achievement test scores. Although Paideia is not designed solely to enhance scores, the record at Seventy-First shows that the Paideia approach has helped keep scores among the best in the state.

In 1997, 86.7 percent of the Seventy-First students reached or were above grade level in reading and math scores. The scores have climbed each subsequent year and last year reached 94.5 percent. Students in all three grades at the school (6th-8th) scored above 90 percent proficiency on end of grade math scores in each of the last three years with eighth grade scores in 2000 reaching 98.3.

Williams says the scores are no accident with Paideia as the center of learning at Seventy-First. "The most beneficial aspect of Paideia is that it encourages, allows and promotes a higher level of thinking among students," she said. "They get beyond the surface of what a teacher might say and look deeper at subjects and topics. Paideia encourages students to really get beyond words and examine thoughts and ideas and motives behind topics."

Williams credits Paideia instruction with helping reduce the achievement gap that often exists among students of different ethnic backgrounds or races. "Paideia seminars encourage students, many of them racial minorities, who tend to lag behind and

may not have felt empowered in regular classroom settings because of not understanding material or fears of speaking to reach their potential. Seminars give them the opportunity to step up and have something to say that is worthwhile. Once students begin to feel good about themselves and about what they are saying, they become more encouraged and more ready to learn and express themselves."

With its high record of achievement, the challenge for faculty and students at Seventy-First is to continue to meet the challenge of academic excellence. "We are constantly looking for more challenging material to allow us to maintain our progress and achievement," Williams said, with nods of agreement from her colleagues, Seventy-first principal Joann Pearce and teacher Doris Brisson. That's why she placed in her classroom the sign about good not being good enough if better is possible. So far, getting better has become a habit. Paideia has been one of the keys to allowing that to become a reality as well as a goal.

## **Culture**

Seventy-First Classical Middle School is located just on the edge of bustling Fort Bragg, N.C., one of the country's best known and largest military bases. Although not modeled specifically after military discipline, Seventy-First has adopted a set of carefully chosen, hard-and-fast rules dealing with academics and behavior that are designed to turn out the best and brightest students possible.

The school was established in 1996 through the consolidation of six schools in the surrounding township. Paideia instruction was begun the first year as part of the effort to build a stronger educational base for students regardless of background or racial or economic restrictions. The school's demographics closely mirror the Cumberland County population.

Most students come from middle income homes with 30 percent eligible for free or reduced lunches. Fifty-one percent of the students are white, 38 percent are African-American, and the remainder from multiple nationalities. Forty percent of the students are from military households.

The school's curriculum and disciplinary rules are based on the philosophy that children learn best when distractions are minimized and heavy emphasis is placed on academics. Seventy-First has adopted its

own set of disciplinary rules to supplement those of the county school system.

One of the rules is adherence to a dress code (blue or khaki pants and white tops). Seventy-First was the first school in the county to adopt a dress code; now 12 other schools follow that rule. "With the dress code, students tell us they are accepted for who they are and not for what they wear," Principal Pearce said of student acceptance of the rule.

The school's mission statement follows the thinking of the school's motto and philosophy: The staff of Seventy-First Classical Middle School is committed to providing a safe and orderly learning environment that integrates academics, the great works of diverse cultures, and virtues of good character, thereby empowering the students to achieve excellence as citizens and lifelong learners

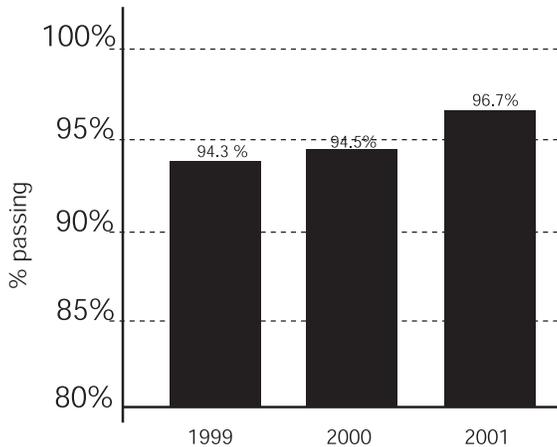
Seventy-First faculty recognize a direct link between Paideia's teaching and learning methodology and improvements in school climate. "By using Paideia methods of teaching (seminars and coaching), I can get students more involved in what they are reading and get them to think more about what they are reading. They can come up with new concepts on the basics of what they are learning and are more ready to speak up and express their own views. It has a very positive effect on peer respect. This is really a plus with respect and discipline," Williams said.

Sixth grade teacher Doris Brisson uses seminars often. Her students are learning Paideia methods for the first time in sixth grade. By the time they reach Williams' eighth grade classes they're accustomed to more open and deeper discussions. "But with the seminar approach, students learn to listen better," Brisson said of her students. "Once they get familiar with that approach, they have extremely good discussions and are comfortable expressing themselves in front of others. The idea that there is no wrong answer in their discussions is a tremendous thing for sixth graders. They know that no one will put them down for their answers and that what they say will be given thought. It makes quite a difference with students, and it also helps teachers learn from student ideas." Brisson also agreed that seminars that kept students more involved helped reduce discipline problems.

As the accompanying graphs show, in recent years well over 90% of Seventy-First students have been performing at or above standardized levels of proficiency in reading, math and writing.

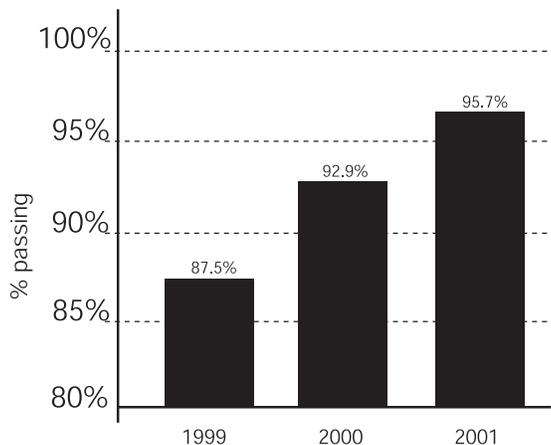
### Seventy-First Middle School

6<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade State READING/MATH Composite  
from 1999 to 2001



### Seventy-First Middle School

7<sup>th</sup> Grade State WRITING Test  
from 1999 to 2001



## Community Involvement

Seventy-First is a school of choice, meaning parents have the opportunity to enroll their children regardless of residential district lines. Half the student body of 550 comes from outside normal district lines because of the school's reputation for excellence. The school is at capacity, and there is a waiting list of parents who have asked for slots for their children when openings occur. Students who live within the school district are provided bus service, but those who live outside the district lines are required to provide their own transportation.

Principal Pearce and faculty members attribute the school's success to multiple factors, including parental involvement and staff dedication. But high on their list of reasons for steady high achievement is Paideia instruction that affords opportunities for innovative and creative teaching methods that follow the school motto of life-long learning and continuous academic improvement.

## Leadership

"Paideia is a continuous work in progress," Principal Pearce said. "But we started our school with a group of risk takers who wanted to be better and do something different and positive. That's what Paideia is. Our staff genuinely cares about our students and what they can accomplish and achieve. This all fits with the Paideia philosophy. We expect more of our students and have set high standards. Paideia serves us well."

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**CHATTANOOGA SCHOOL FOR  
THE ARTS AND SCIENCES  
K-12**

**CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE**

# *Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences / K-12*

Chattanooga, Tennessee

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The history of this city is as interesting as it is lengthy. The first inhabitants were Chickamauga, a branch of the Cherokees, who settled the area in the middle 1700s. These earliest settlers called what is now Lookout Mountain, just south of the city, the Chat-to-to-noog-gee, meaning “mountain rising to a point,” from which the city adopted its name. The mountain, however, was more than just a name. It also served as a barrier to help protect the Native American settlers from enemies. Despite the protection of the mountain, the Chickamauga tribes were conquered in 1794 and forced to move westward. White residents changed the name to Chattanooga in 1839. Then came the Civil War Battle of Chattanooga, a turning point in the losing Confederate cause.

The city, like so many others with changing industrial climates, slipped into an economic abyss in the latter third of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, only to emerge more viable and vibrant than ever in the middle and late 1990s. And as is so often the case in local communities, as the cities go, so goes the public school system. Chattanooga has been no exception.

There is one school, though, that stands out as a testament to the determination of Chattanooga citizens and their long history of recovery and rebirth. Chattanooga School for the Arts & Sciences (CSAS) has proved as resilient as the city’s early leaders. While CSAS is far from the only school with a record of success in Hamilton County, Tennessee, it has overcome heavy odds and shown more verve than most in order to reach its present stage of excellence. The school dared to be different.

The effort has not been easy, but the results have been rewarding. CSAS ranks at the top among the county’s 81 schools in academic achievement. Virtually all graduating seniors (last year 97 percent) at CSAS advance on to quality colleges and universities. Collegiate academic scholarship dollars to seniors at CSAS surpass those at other county schools even though the number of seniors at the school is much smaller than most graduating classes in the county. Students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade routinely reach and often surpass state standards. Students who have failed in other school settings, including private

academies, often do well once they enroll at CSAS.

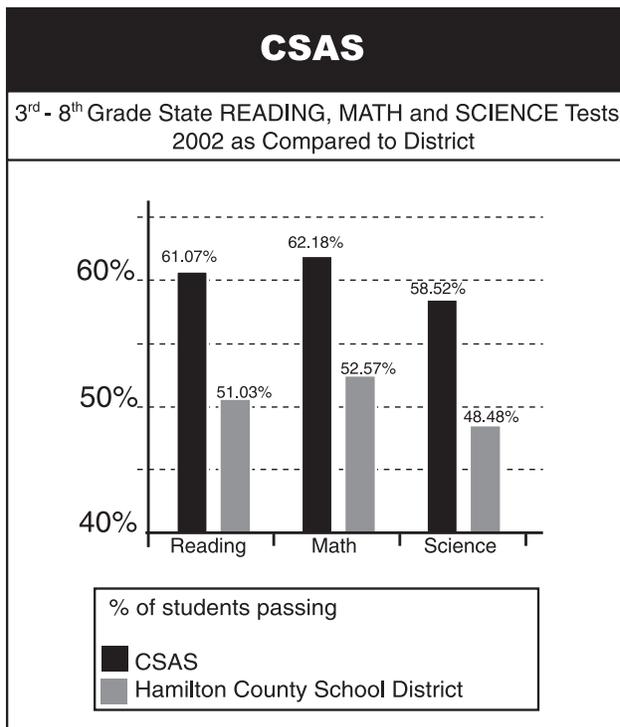
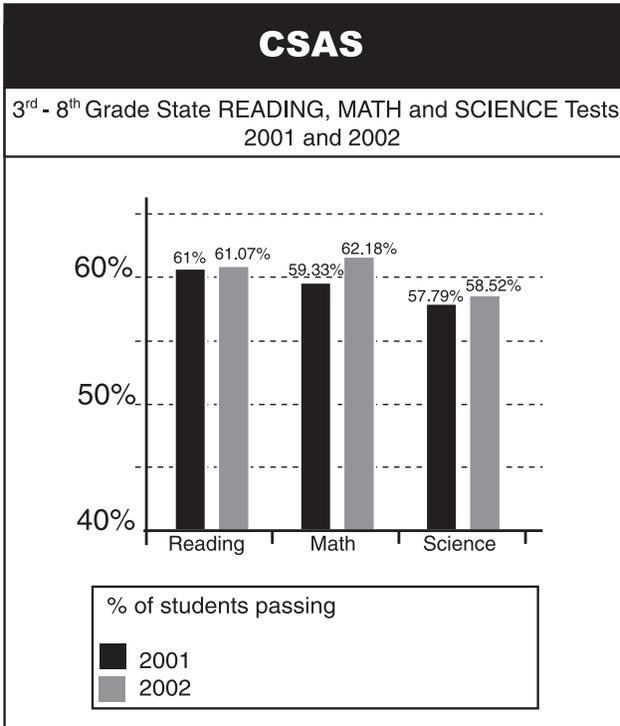
“There is no doubt in my mind that the Socratic seminars that are part of the Paideia teaching method have played a major role in the school’s success,” said Joanne Smith, former teacher at CSAS and now director of magnet schools in Hamilton County. Neither Smith nor other educators at the school give Paideia all the credit for CSAS achievements, of course. But without this approach to teaching and more active student involvement, they acknowledge that success would have been less visible and harder to achieve.

CSAS, in fact, was created primarily to serve students through the seminar and other Paideia instructional methods, as proposed by the late philosopher Mortimer Adler in the early 1980s. It is also significant that it was the parents of the city, not school leaders, who recognized the need for the school and insisted on its creation.

The Paideia approach to learning, while a cornerstone of classroom performance, is not the only thing different about the academic life at CSAS. There is no tracking of students and no rankings to satisfy some central office quota. There are no specialty labs and no advanced classes that deny acceptance based on test scores. The learning environment is the same for all students, based on the theory that all are equally able to learn in a heterogeneous setting.

Not only are the classroom standards at CSAS different from most other schools in Hamilton County; so is the social climate. Athletics definitely take a back seat to academics. There is no football team, no lost class time for sports or other non-academic distractions. Students there also are required to serve and achieve outside the classroom. Each CSAS student must complete 100 hours of community service projects, half in the senior year, in order to earn a diploma. “At CSAS it is not ‘uncool’ to be considered smart and want to learn,” said teacher Christine Couch. “Students are not ostracized if they are different. Everyone is considered equal and all students take the same courses and use the same course of study. There is a sense of acceptance and tolerance where students are together and learn from each other from kindergarten through

CSAS is known throughout the Hamilton County School District as a consistently high performer on state-wide tests. As the graphs below show, students achieve well above district averages in multiple subject areas.



grade twelve.” “Students at CSAS can just be themselves and be accepted,” added magnet director Smith. “It’s OK at the school to be a geek and still be well adjusted.”

Among the 1,100 students there in grades K-12, scores historically range from above average to exemplary across multiple courses (reading, math and social studies) and tests (SAT, ACT). Students at CSAS regularly score above state and national averages on academic achievement.

Magnet schools like CSAS tend to draw the best and brightest students because they cater to specific programs and pull in top students for specific core subjects. CSAS does not take that approach. Its magnet program is Paideia and it accepts students from all backgrounds or academic levels without limits. The student body racial makeup is 55 percent white and 45 percent minority. “Sometimes it is more difficult to teach in an environment with such a diverse group of students,” said former CSAS teacher Marcy O’Neill. “We don’t start with a lot of students who are considered top academic performers. We accept students for who they are. But each student has an equal chance through Paideia coaching and seminars, and our slower students learn from the those who are more advanced.”

The CSAS reputation for excellence is well known in Hamilton County and continues to grow. Satisfied parents and students are the best advertising. Parents who wanted their children in the school because of its academic record have, literally, camped out in motor homes on school grounds in order to get limited available spots. That practice started when CSAS enrollment was determined in a first-come-first-served basis. Because that system was believed to lock out families without opportunities to wait in lines, student acceptance is now 50 percent determined by lottery.

The success of CSAS is clearly based on academic performance, not aesthetics. The physical plant is old, rundown, unattractive and in many ways uncomfortable. A current debate in the city is whether it would be better to demolish the building and start anew or continue to make repairs and renovations. The age or appearance at CSAS clearly has not bothered parents who wanted improved academic standards for their students when they insisted that the school board open it under the Paideia concept of learning.

In 1984, a few years after philosopher Adler

articulated the Paideia approach to learning and wrote in a book entitled *The Paideia Proposal*, a group of Chattanooga parents, led by two officials of a private foundation in the city, took their idea for CSAS to the school board.

“We concluded that Adler’s book had addressed one of our fundamental concerns about (local) public schools,” said Lyndhurst Foundation director Jack Murrah. “That concern was the well-intentioned but ultimately devastating practice of tracking students.

“The correlation between (student) tracks and demographics had already convinced us that social stereotypes were weighing heavily in the school’s expectations of students and that the full development of great numbers of students was being stunted by those expectations. We just felt the burdens of learning fell disproportionately upon the least advantaged students and their families.”

Murrah and his predecessor Rick Montague invited more than 100 parents to a series of conversations about Adler’s *Paideia Proposal*. From those initial conversations, participants agreed they wanted to do better by their students and saw the approach as an opportunity — and a challenge — to enhanced learning. “What we wanted,” Murrah said, “was to establish a demonstration school that was intentionally diverse socially and academically in student makeup, but one with a uniformly high standard of intellectual expectations for every student.”

Not all parents involved in the discussions agreed with the principle or the strategy, but the majority did. “That gave us the courage to approach the school board, both as a foundation offering resources and as a civic group of parents advocating change,” Murrah explained. It took some persuasion and persistence. It also took two years. But success ultimately came. The school was opened in 1986 with support of the school board and committed resources from the foundation. The rest, as with the city’s background itself, is history.

In Murrah’s view, the school has achieved more

than just enhanced academic performance. “I believe the experiment has helped expand the conversation about equality in public education,” he said of his foundation’s support for the concept. “Demonstration schools (like CSAS) have the mission of discovering and promulgating successful educational practices at other schools.

“Educational success is not dependent on the ‘quality’ of children or their families, but upon how teachers treat their students, how they teach them, and what they believe about them.” Murrah said, however, that past successes are not reason to reduce the effort at CSAS or other schools. “It is commonplace for people in Chattanooga to talk the talk of all children learning at high standards, although we are still far from everyone walking the walk. “Those of us who were early leaders in the CSAS movement are gratified that we succeeded in getting the school started, but are still disappointed by the incompleteness of that success,” Murrah said. “We must not allow the commitment to a certain superficial uniformity of process surpass the more substantive goal of reducing or eliminating achievement gaps that are grotesquely correlated to social class and race.”

Murrah’s words should have meaning to CSAS officials and Chattanooga school leaders. It wasn’t uniformity that brought the school’s successes. It was parental vision and a dogged determination to be different and prove the worth of individuals without regard to class or background. It was parental support and foundation resources that brought the school into reality. It was the Paideia approach to teaching that has helped make it successful. The record of achievement clearly speaks for itself.

The students are speaking for themselves as well. Here is what a pair of tenth graders have to say about their experience in Paideia Seminars:

“[Seminar] helps you to voice your opinion and to get your point across.”

“It makes you want to know why...you try to figure things out by asking questions.”

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## *Afterword*



## Afterword

The collection of informative and objective data about school reform is always more of a journey than a destination. The reason for this is that the more data we collect, the more we know about our work, which in turn leads to wider, more systemic notions of what a good school should be and do. As the preceding stories attest, much has been accomplished, and there is much work to be done, in all areas of our work with schools. We recognize that Paideia offers schools tools for transformation on many levels, not just in terms of improved student achievement, but within other contexts as well.

A recent “Report Card” developed by former North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. as a part of the First in America Challenge provides a compelling list of five significant areas of school transformation. Note that only the first of these focuses directly on achievement: high student performance; every child ready to learn; safe, orderly and caring schools; quality teachers and administrators; and strong family, business, and community support. We believe that this trend toward using a wider lens through which to view and measure school improvement is a wise one for several reasons. One, all of these factors affect the lives of students, sometimes dramatically. Second, they are all interrelated, so that even if we accept a narrow notion of school improvement goals focused only on the area of “high student performance,” as we must attend to all other areas in order to achieve this one. Third, if we succeed in transforming the climate of a school such that students feel both more secure and more empowered, the results can be dramatic no matter how we measure them.

Because the Paideia Program has to do with the development of the whole child—emotional, physical, spiritual as well as intellectual—we are always interested to know more about the program’s impact on those domains. And for that reason, we are very happy to report on the growing body of evidence that shows Paideia to have a strong and beneficent impact on school culture, specifically, the self-efficacy of students. Researchers from the Center for Research and Evaluation at the University of North Carolina Greensboro identified a number of important outcomes that are directly related to how students regard school and their role in the school community. During the first year of a large, multi-year program evaluation, researchers documented “increases in students’ perceptions of the quality of their teachers, their self-concept, . . . and their sense of self-efficacy”; and the Paideia Program “was generally associated with similar outcomes for girls and boys, and for majority and minority students” (Center for Educational Research and Evaluation, 1998). In the second year, this trend continued, causing researchers to write that “in particular, the effects on interpersonal factors suggest that students in Paideia classrooms consistently experience less friction and alienation” (1999).

In the early days of the “high-stakes accountability” movement, many policy makers would have said that this was “soft” data, of little consequence in measuring the impact of a school on the mind of a student. But many recent and tragic events have served to remind us that school safety is of the utmost importance. Furthermore, as we have grown more sophisticated in assessing the quality of life in school buildings, we have come to realize that real intellectual growth only occurs in a secure and empowering climate. Thus, in the last chapter as in the first, we take care to remind ourselves that Paideia is the Greek word for the upbringing of the whole child, and that our intent is to prepare that child for a lifetime defined by learning.

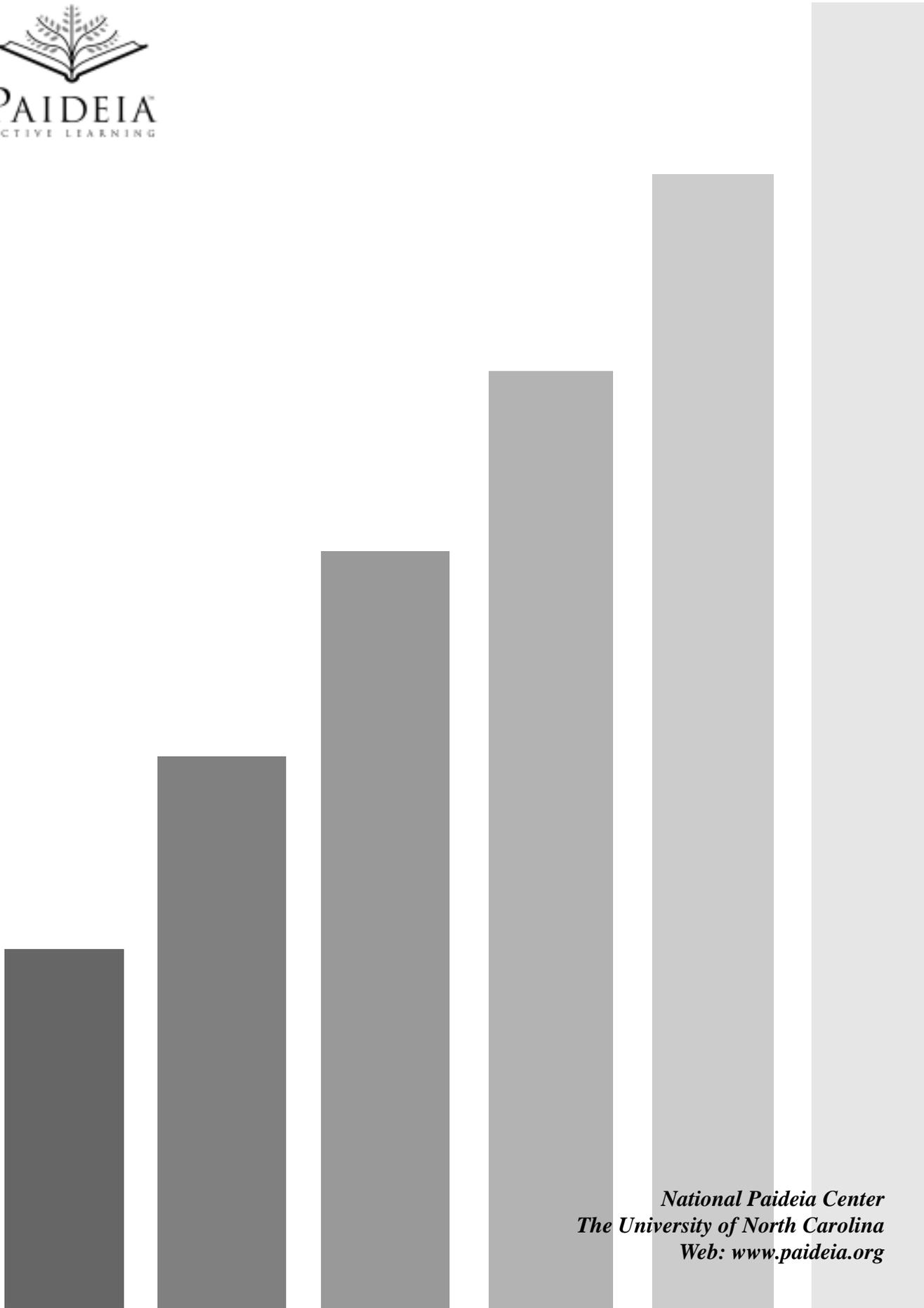


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